

Walbach Tower: A Lost Icon



Jim Cerny
NCHS Program Series
May 20, 2014

2014

the 200th Anniversary

All Walbach

All the Time!

Venture into wildest New Castle!

- What it is.
- Fort Point setting.
- Construction details.
- Sullivan approach.
- Jordan approach.
- Cultural icon.
- Next?

Fort Point aerial view today



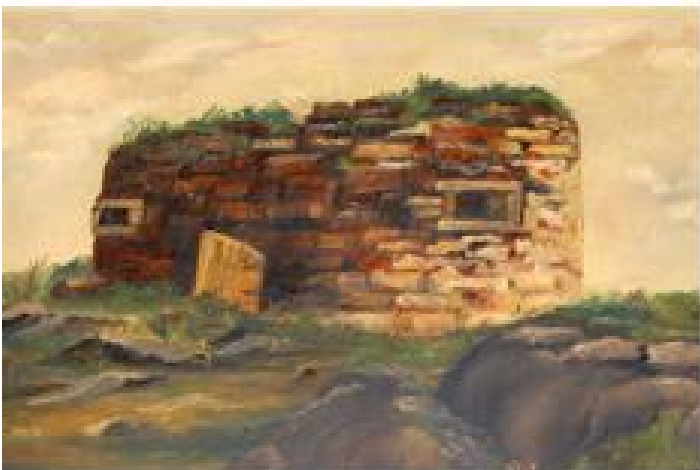
Today -Sullivan Lane View



Today - South Side



The Fort as Icon.

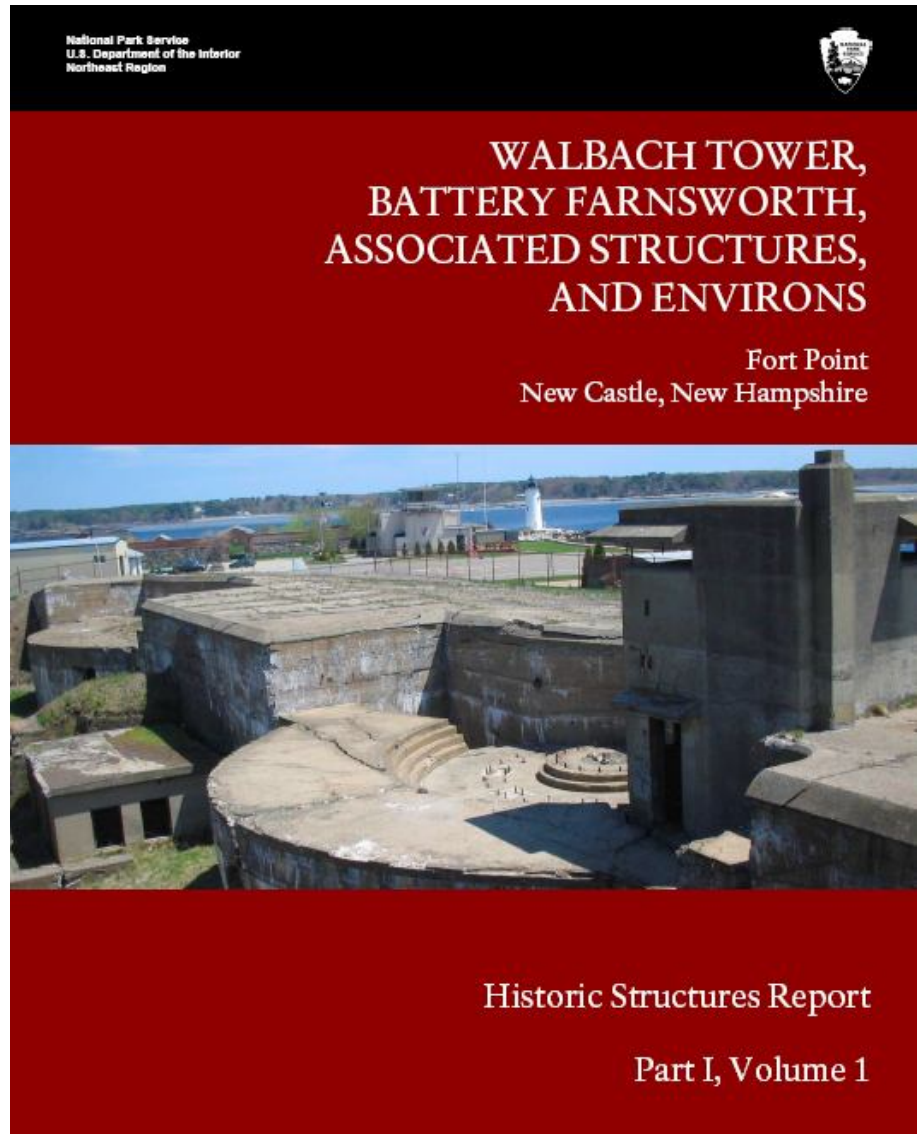


Fort Point

- Fort William and Mary
- Fort Constitution
- Lighthouse - several
- Battery Farnsworth 1897-1898
- Walbach Tower 1814
- Mine Casemate 1920
- Power Plant 1921
- Farnsworth Observation Post 1943

Sources

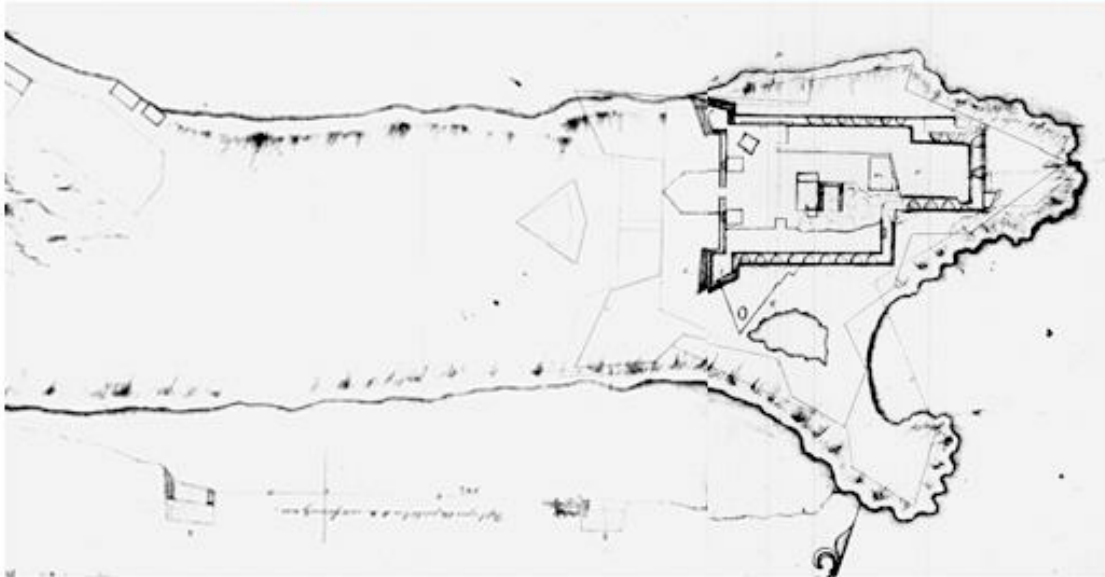
- Maxam book.
- National Park Service reports.
- Rich Rouleau of UNH.
- North American Forts Network.



Fort Point aerial view today



Wolfgang Romer 1699 Plan



Plan by Wolfgang Romer in 1699 for proposed changes to Fort William and Mary (most not implemented).
From *The Crown Collection of Photographs of American Maps, Series III, plates 210, 211.*

Fort Sketch by John Walbach in 1806

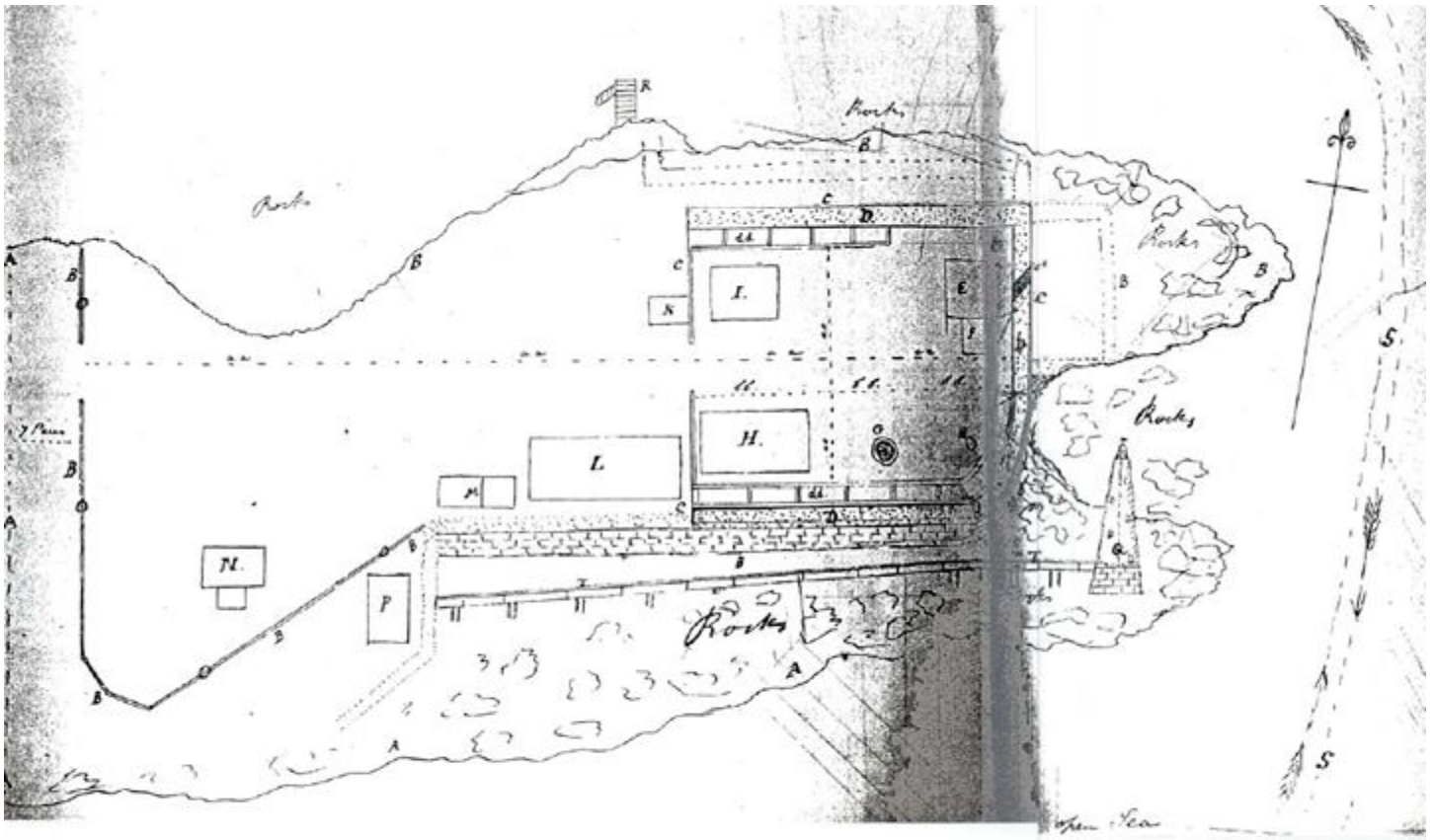
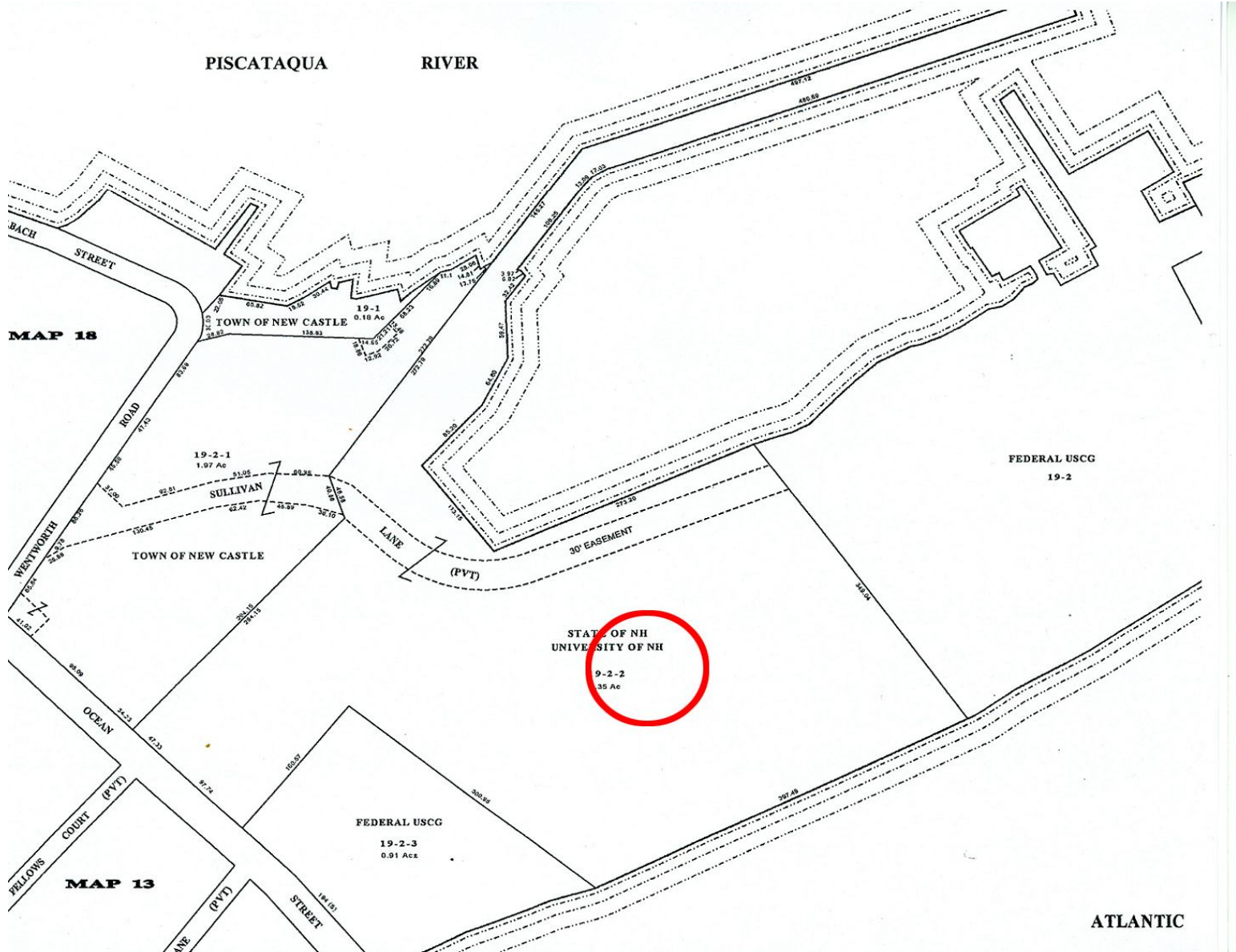
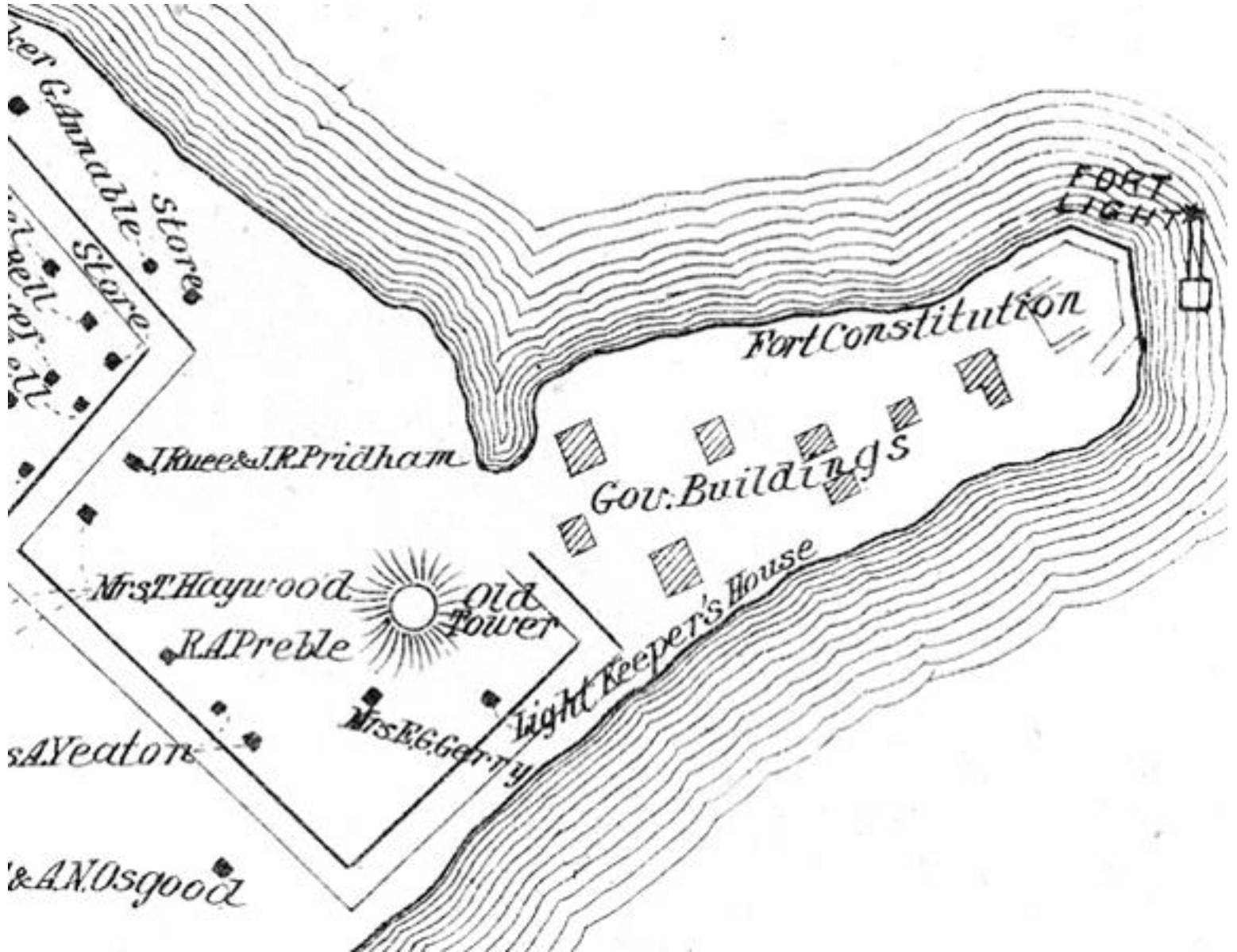


Figure CH- 10. Sketch of Fort Constitution by Captain Walbach, July 1806. [p. 107]

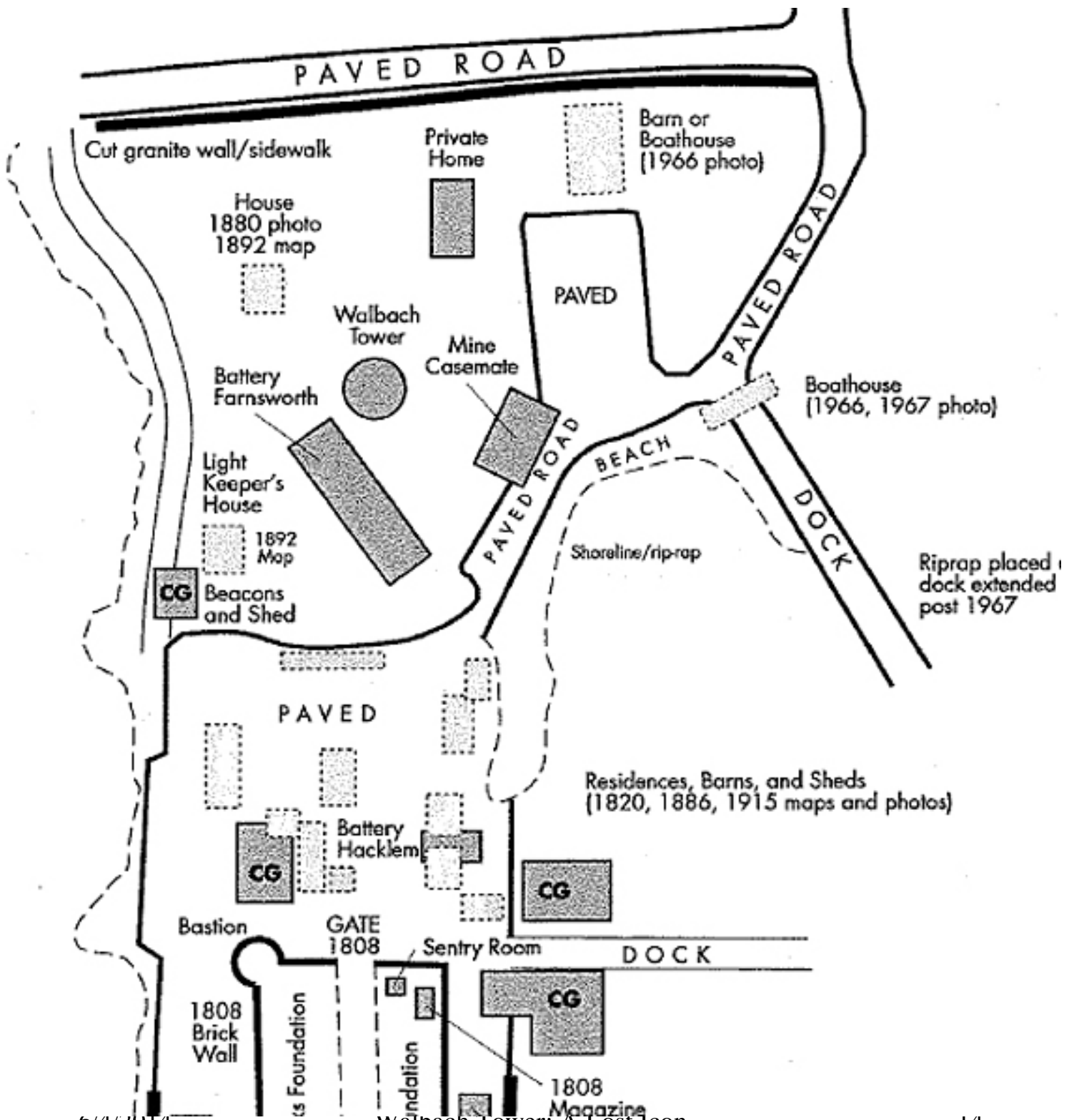
Property Boundaries



View in 1892 Hurd Atlas



Plan of Historic Growth



Location Details



Building - Fact Sheet.

- Circular design – Martello type
- Built summer 1814
- Treaty of Ghent – 2/1815
- 58 foot diameter
- 11-16 feet high
- Three gun casemates – 4 lb guns
- Naval cannon on roof – 32 lb gun
- Powder magazine
- 60-70K bricks
- Local stone quarries
- Center support
- Terrplain with turf

Cross Section (drawn in 1821)

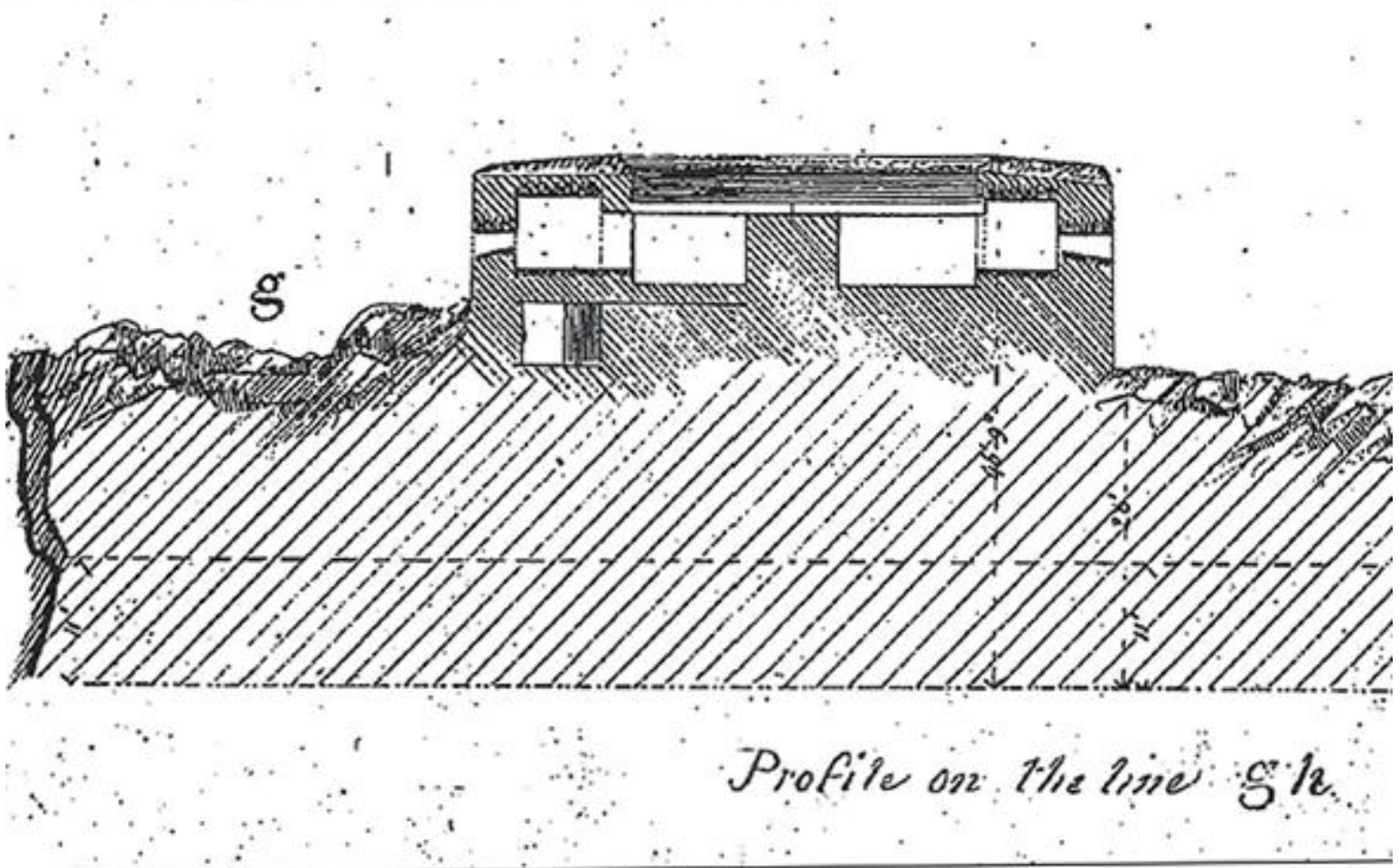


Figure WT-13. Cross-section of Walbach Tower (detail of Figure WT-12).

HSR, p. 25

Significance

HSR, pt1, v1, 786

Walbach Tower is highly significant:

- for its association with the War of 1812
 - Daniel Webster's call and the grassroots efforts to defend East Coast harbors
- for its association with General John B. Walbach
- for its building typology as a Martello tower

Walbach Tower as a ruin is highly significant:

- for its association with the picturesque movement
 - painted by artists
 - subject of poems and antiquarians' musings
 - highly prized as a landscape feature
- for its association with the Historic Preservation Movement in the United States
 - Daughters of the Revolution, State of New Hampshire
 - National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, State of New Hampshire
 - War Department
 - U.S. Department of the Interior and National Historic Preservation legislation (post- significant period)

Condition in 1865

(Griffith booklet)

It now presents a ruinous appearance. The bricks having become loosened, many of them have fallen and now lie scattered at its base. As the razing of this structure is at present under consideration, it is advisable that all who wish to examine it should soon do so, as a visit to the Tower is well worth the time spent in its examination.

George B. Griffith, ed., 1865, *History of Fort Constitution and "Walbach Tower,"* Portsmouth Harbor, N.H., p. 7.

Common Historic View



Casements & Embrasures

Openings

4. Embrasures, three in number (photographs date to ca. 1890- 1900):

East & North
Embrasures



North
Embrasure



South
Embrasure



South
Embrasure



- the 1821 account says the tower had four; however, photographic evidence suggests there were three (could the doorway have been counted as a embrasure?); an 1865 account described the embrasures as three, each contained a small 4- pounder gun⁴
 - east side, provided view of the Second System Fort Constitution
 - north side, provided view of the neck of Fort Point and the River
 - south side, provided view of Town Beach and the Atlantic Ocean

⁴ Frost, page 6.

Old View from New Castle Beach



Shore Road View – 1927



Walback Tower and Fort Point Light House as they appeared in 1927. Both structures have played important rolls in our Military History and economic lives. (photo courtesy of Cynthia Pridham Thomas)

HABS Documentation Photo



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Today - South Side



Fort Point aerial view



Farnsworth Gun



Battery Farnsworth, with the foundation of Walbach Tower in the right foreground. The battery has just been completed, except for the iron railings along the stairs and parapet. The two guns are 8-inch breech-loading rifles, mounted on disappearing-type carriages. The west wall and gate of Fort Constitution can just be made out in the left background through the fog.
(from Bolling Smith Collection, via American Forts Network web site)

Battery Farnsworth 1915

Battery Elon Farnsworth - 1915



From the Kenneth Maxam collection, from a copy by Douglas Armsden via Pete Payette & American Forts Network

Battery Farnsworth Looking Southerly



Figure BF- 51. View behind Battery Elon Farnsworth, looking southwest; shows top of central traverse at far left, Loading Platform and ammunition crane of Gun Emplacement No. 1 at left, ruins of Walbach Tower at center, and rock backstop at right. [HSR-502]

Power Plant

1921 Power Plant



Courtesy of Pete Payette and American Forts Network.

Nestled at the rear of Battery Farnsworth, between Gun Emplacements #1 and #2, is the 1921 power plant. It contained two generators, each with an associated radiator.

Mine Casemate Sullivan Lane



Mine Casemate Entrance



Mine Casemate an interior room



Mine Casemate another interior room



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Farnsworth Lookout Post



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But wait, there's more!

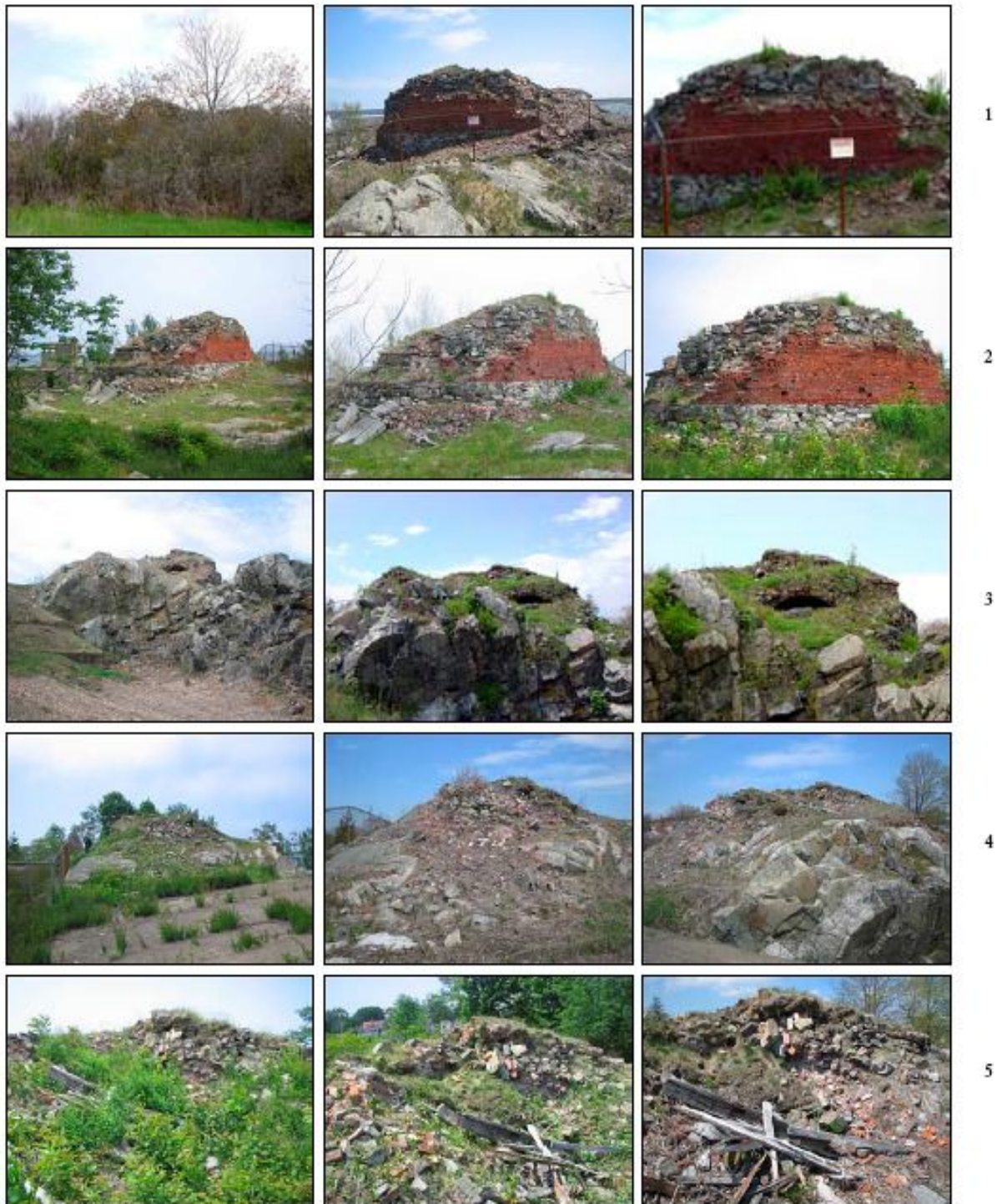
Farnsworth slide show
developed by Rich Rouleau,
some 96 slides is on the
NCHS Web site.

Search on “Rouleau”.

Today

Much stabilization work done by
UNH circa 2005 as part of
Pier and Support Facilities
Project.

Elevations in 2005



Elevations, top to bottom:

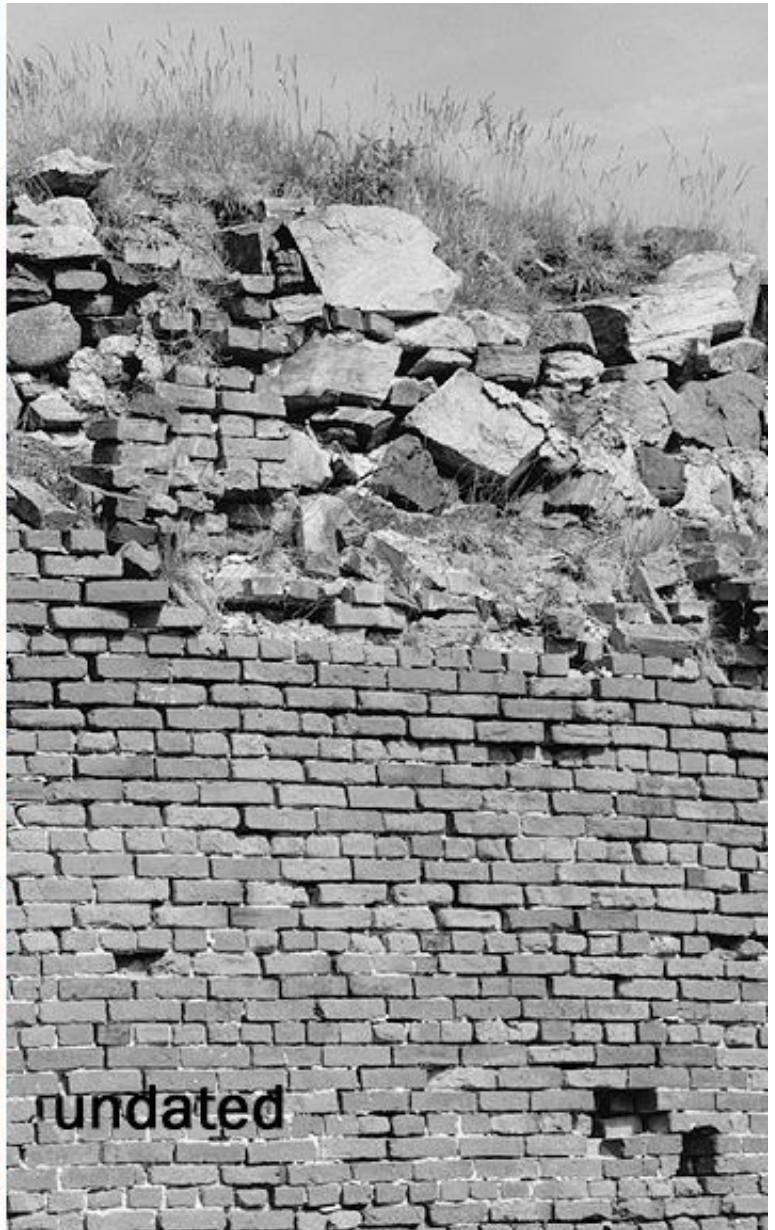
- Row 1 – west elevation (view toward New Castle residences)
- Row 2 – northwest elevation (view toward New Castle Land and Piscataqua River)
- Row 3 – northeast elevation (view toward Fort Constitution)
- Row 4 – southeast elevation (view toward Atlantic Ocean)
- Row 5 – southwest elevation (view toward Town Beach)

Brick Wythes Before Restoration

HSR, pt2, 163



Brick Repointing – South Side



Top Detail – Sod, Bricks



Farnsworth – Restored



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Farnsworth – Northeasterly



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View Northwesternly



Fort Point aerial view



Sullivan Lane Approach Signage



Existing Historic Marker

Walbach Tower

Nearby Walbach Tower is one of several built along the Atlantic coast during the War of 1812.

Its builder, John de Barth Walbach, came to America from France in 1797. He joined the U.S. Army the following year and rose in rank from a lieutenant in the Light Dragoons to a brigadier general.

Walbach was assigned to Fort Constitution in 1806 and placed in charge of Portsmouth defense. He eventually became second in command of all New England seacoast defenses.

At age 93, General Walbach was still on active duty, the oldest officer in the history of the U.S. Army.



The Walbach Tower

Sullivan Lane Wide View



Sullivan Lane Full View



Sullivan View Zoomed



Sullivan View Casemate Opening



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Walbach Ruins

Interior Powder Magazine



Figure WT- 7. Ruins of Walbach Tower, looking through arched opening in east elevation into powder magazine (photograph taken with a fish- eye lens). [HSR -240]

Jordan Approach



The Jordan View



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Jordan Marker and Walbach Tower



Roland Jordan and Marker



On Jordan Rock



Fenced Off – South Side



Today – South Side



View from Ocean Street

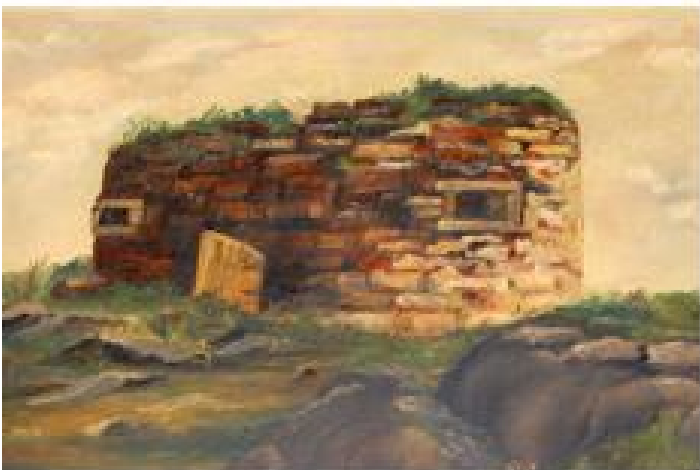


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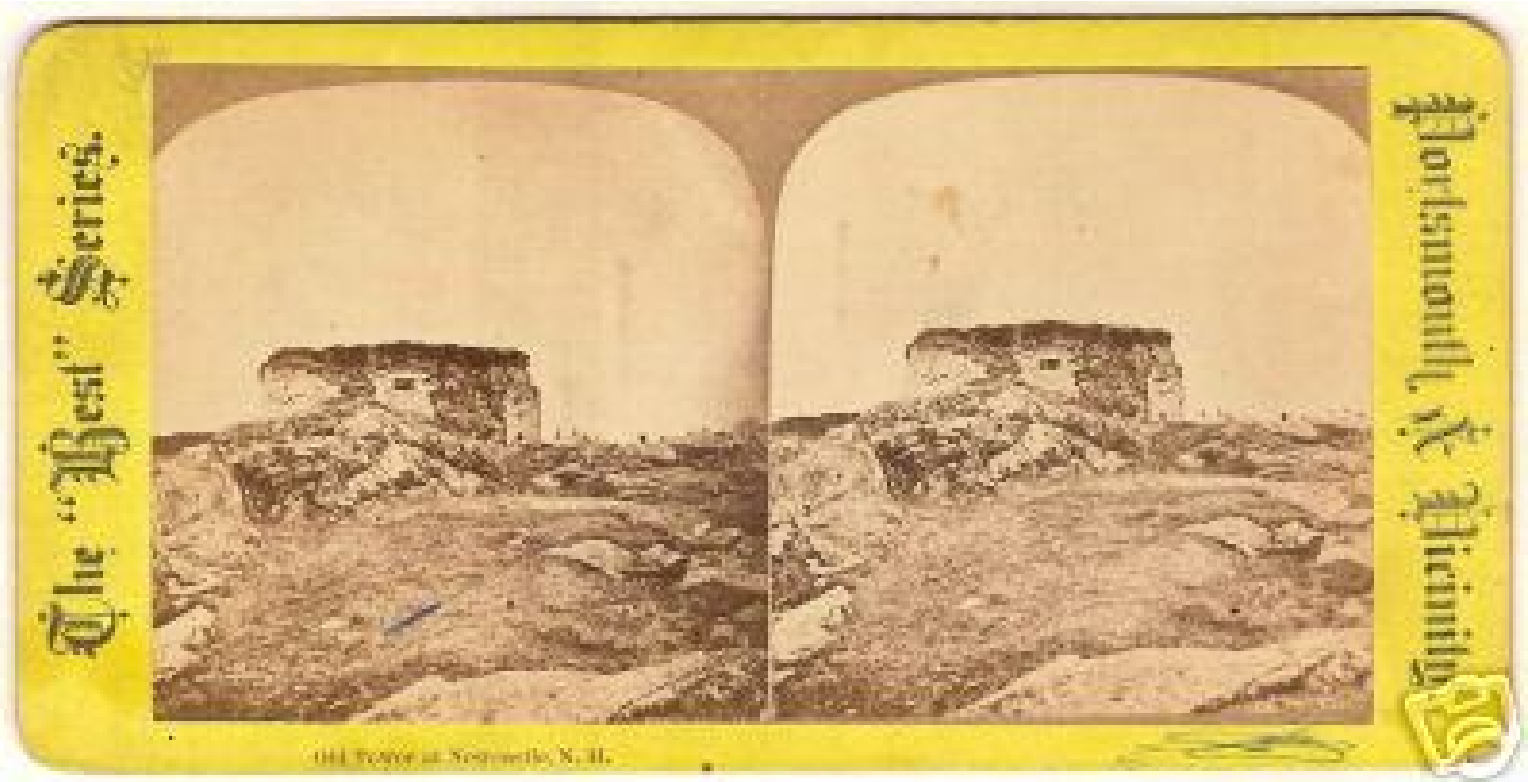
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The Fort as Icon.



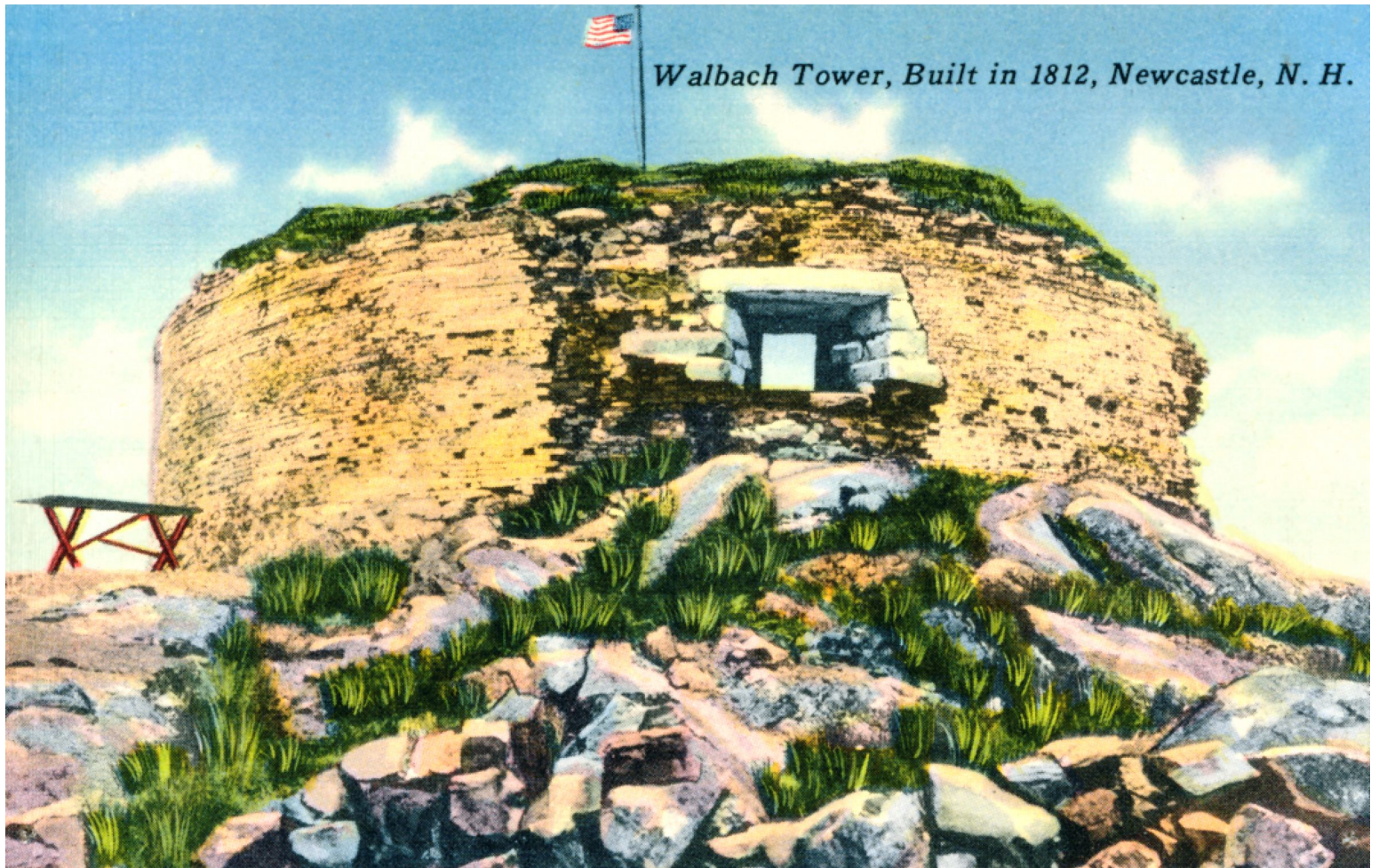
Stereo View



Collection of Postcards



Common Postcard

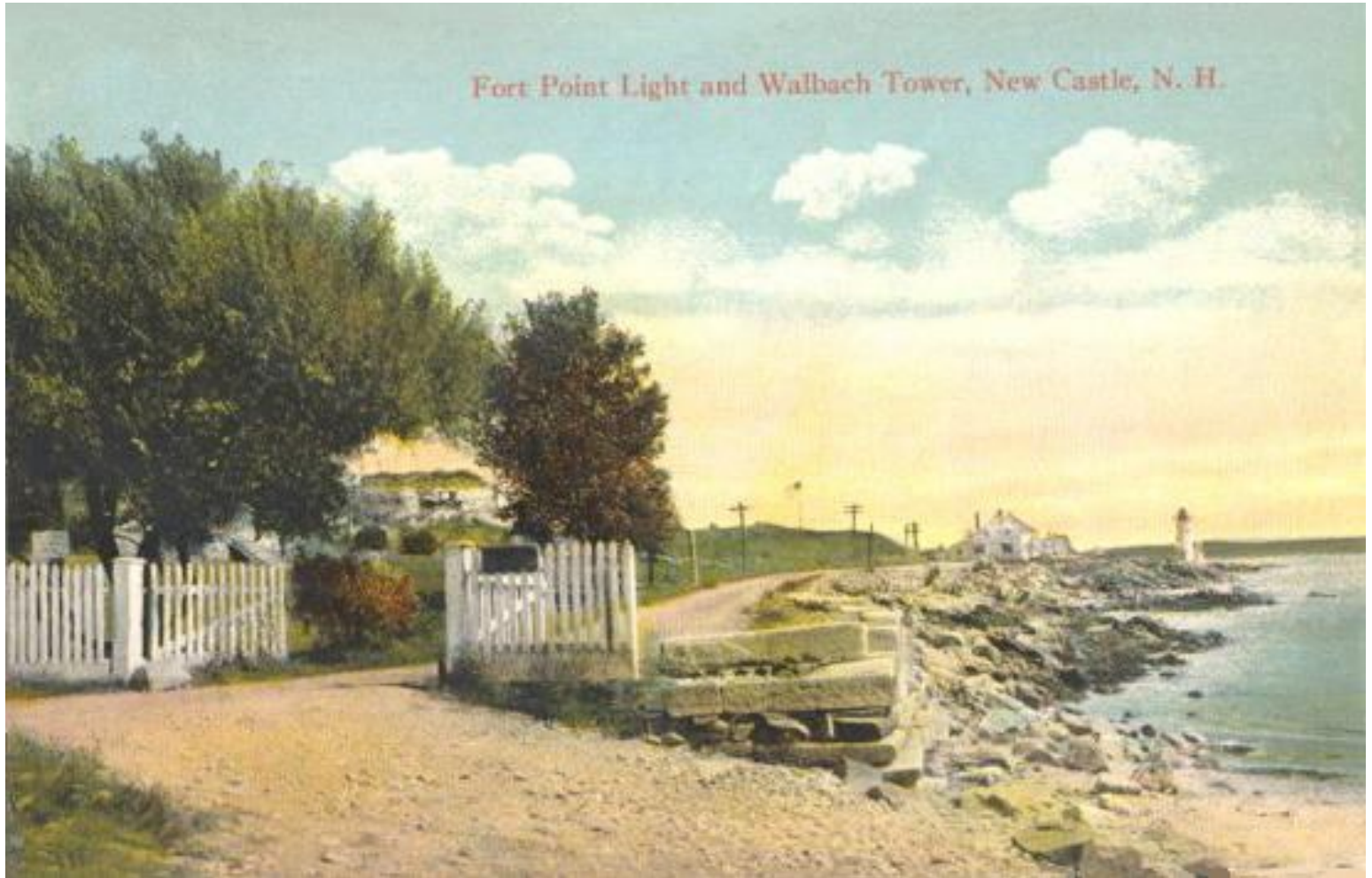


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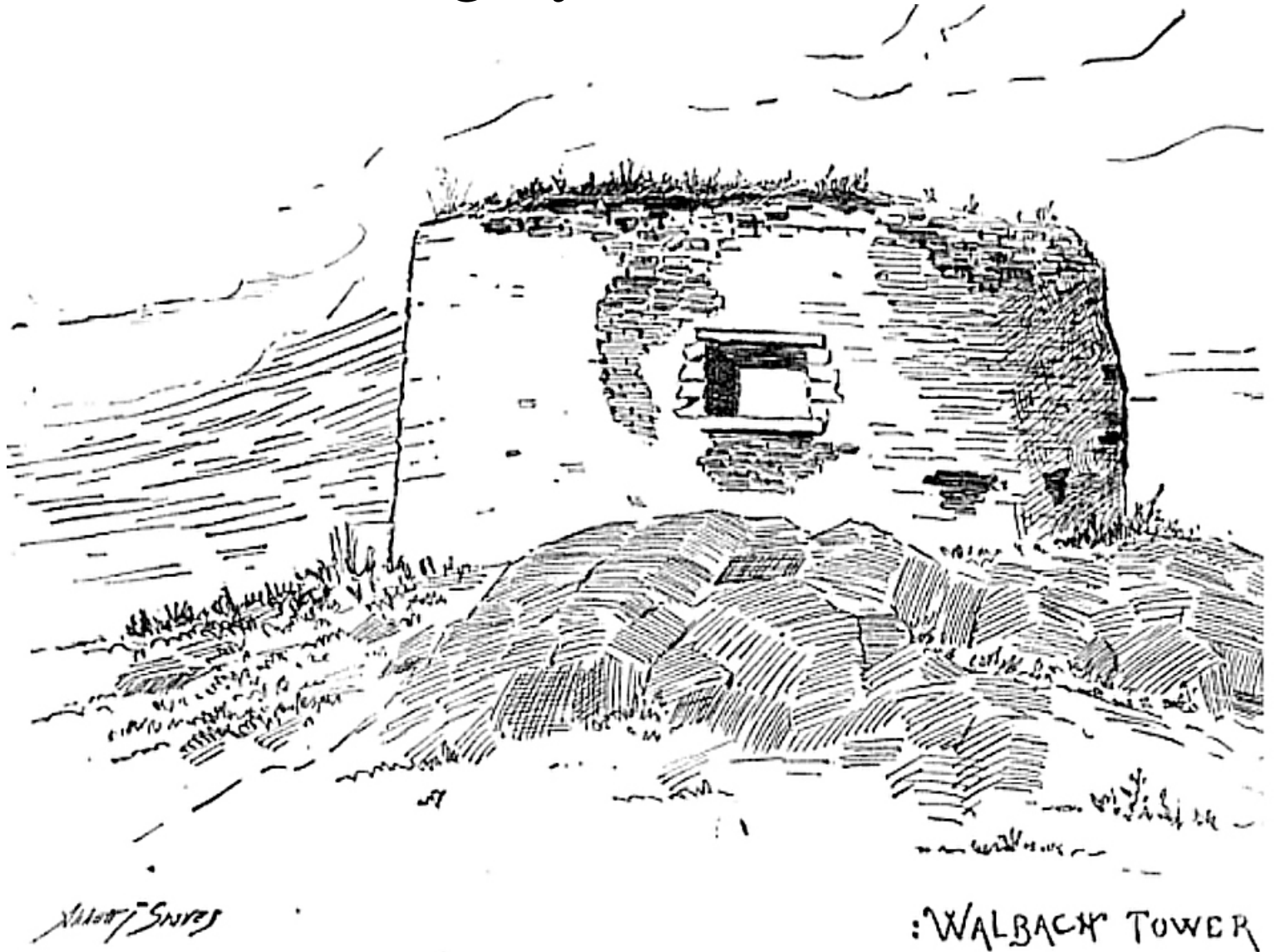
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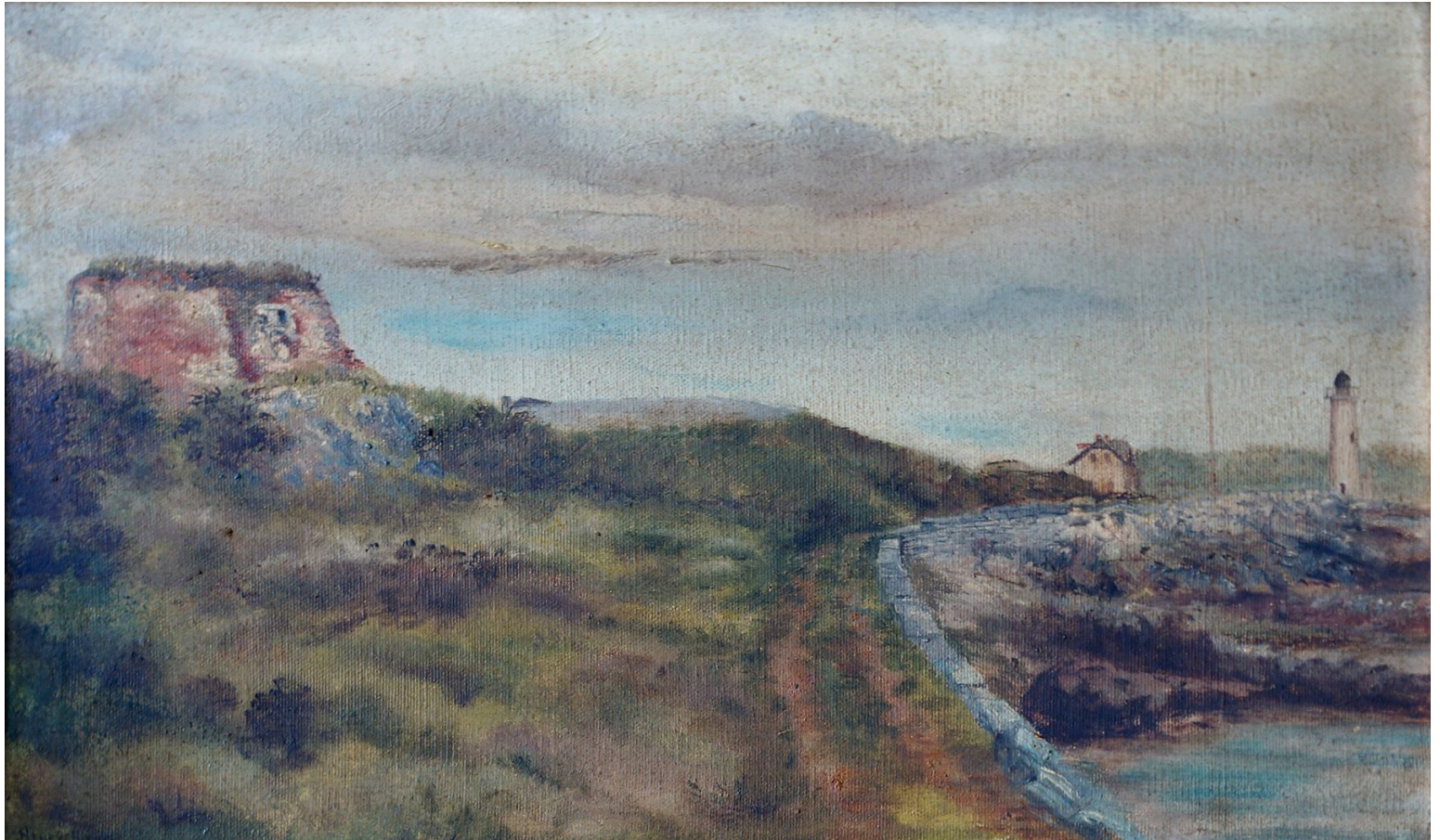
Shore View Postcard



From Albee, 1884
drawing by Albert Graves



Henry Hill Painting, n.d. oil painting



Nellie Horne oil painting



Carolyn McDonald watercolor



WALBACH TOWER

CAROLYN MCDONALD

Helen Pearson watercolor



Elizabeth Rand

oil painting

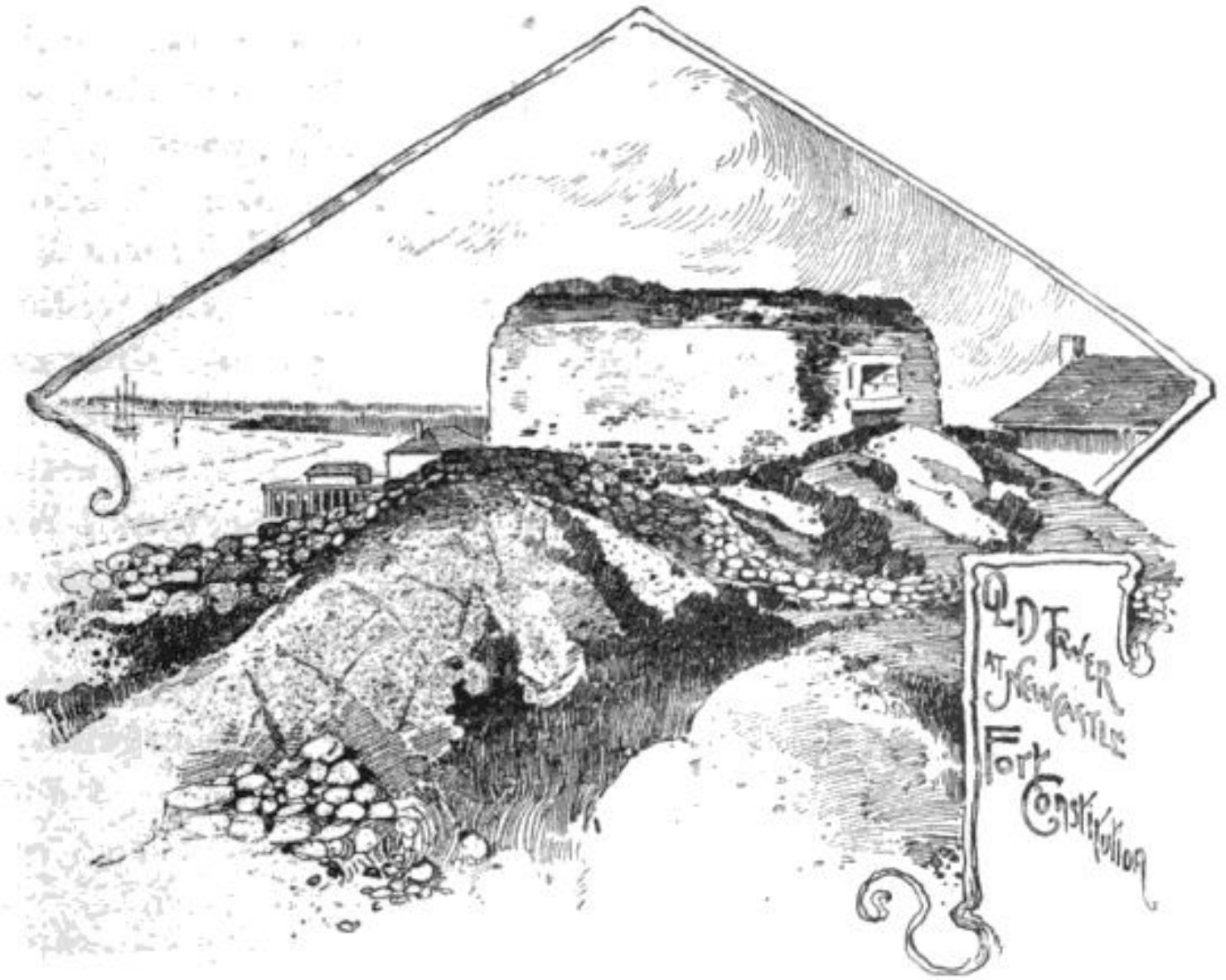


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Moses Foster Sweetser



Memorabilia

- Cups
- Saucer
- Pitcher
- Paper Weight
- Mirror

Cup (1)



Cup (2)



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Saucer



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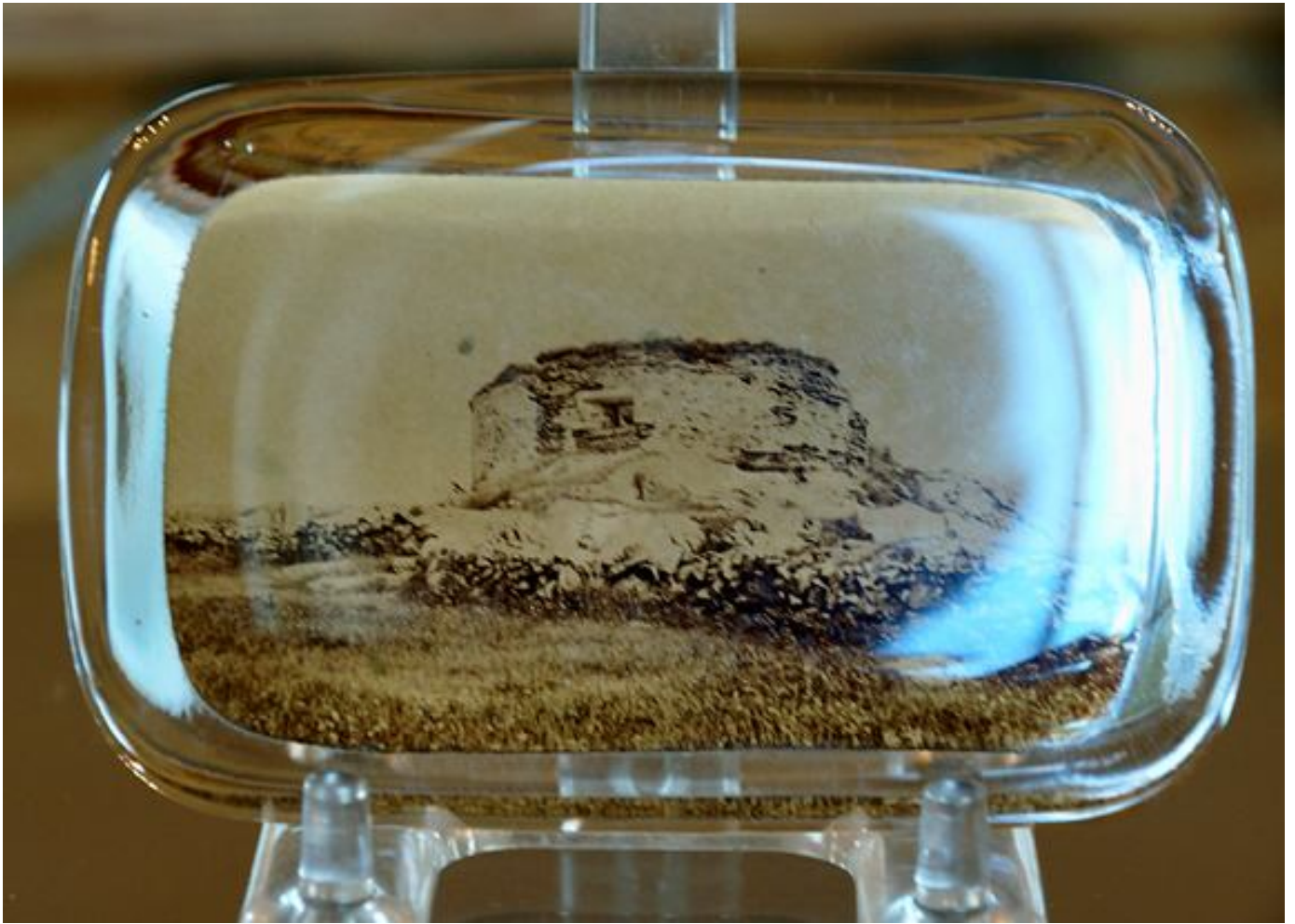
Pitcher



Made in Germany



Paper Weight



Small Mirror



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Drink to Walbach Tower!



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Poetry – Jim's Haiku

Perfectly round,
But very bad mortar.
A ruin.
(November 13, 2013)

Poetry – John Albee

in *New Castle Historic and Picturesque*

(75 lines of free verse)

There, just above the shore, is Walbach Tower,
Its crumbling parapet with grass and weeds
O'er grown, and peaceful in its slow decay.
Old people always tell strange tales to us,
A later race — always old tales are strange.
And seems the story of this ancient Tower
A marvel, though believing while I hear,
Because who tell it do believe it true.

John Albee (1833-1915) was a Unitarian minister turned writer, who lived in Chocorua and New Castle, encouraging development of a summer colony on the shore in the Wild Rose Lane area.)

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Poetry – George Houghton
in *The Atlantic Monthly* (1883)

(48 lines in rhymed couplets)

Four flax-haired boys of Amazeen the
flickering torches stay,
Peopling with titan shadow-groups the
canopy of gray;

Grandsires, with frost above their brows, the
steaming mortar mix;
Dame Tarlton's apron, crisp at dawn, helps
hod the yellow bricks;

While pilot, cooper, mackerelman, parson and
squire as well,
Make haste to plant the pintle-gun, and raise
its citadel.

Poetry - Ozymandias



Shelley's *Ozymandias*

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."^[4]

Smith's *Ozymandias*

In Egypt's sandy silence, all alone,
Stands a gigantic Leg, which far off throws
The only shadow that the Desert knows:—
"I am great OZYMANDIAS," saith the stone,
"The King of Kings; this mighty City shows
"The wonders of my hand."— The City's gone,—
Nought but the Leg remaining to disclose
The site of this forgotten Babylon.

We wonder,—and some Hunter may express
Wonder like ours, when thro' the wilderness
Where London stood, holding the Wolf in chace,
He meets some fragment huge, and stops to guess
What powerful but unrecorded race
Once dwelt in that annihilated place.¹

To Be Continued ...

We intend to self-publish a
Walbach book this year.

Nancy Borden will speak
more about access and events.